

TRANSIT SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting Summary
March 8, 2001

PRESENT: Mark Loflin, chair, Charlotte
Laura Blue, Charlotte
Paul Edmunds, Davidson
Walter Horstman, Matthews

STAFF: Keith Parker, Olaf Kinard, Pete Wallace, David Feltman, Brad Miller, Jon Downing, Mason Martin, Ann Boggs

ABSENT: Jim Blank, Charlotte
Linette Fox, Charlotte
Raenice Goode, Mecklenburg County
Steve Goodman, Charlotte
Bob Inskeep, Huntersville
Kathy Matson, Mint Hill

MEETING TIME: 4:00-5:30 PM

I. Call to Order Mr. Loflin

Mr. Loflin called the meeting to order.

II. Approval of Jan 11 and Feb 8, 2001 Meeting Summaries Mr. Loflin

As there was not a quorum present at the beginning of the meeting, the January 11 and February 8, 2001 Meeting Summaries were not approved. Mr. Horstman requested that the February 8, 2001 Meeting Summary be amended to reflect his presence at the meeting.

III. Discussion Items

Mr. Parker suggested that the agenda be modified to allow for a presentation by Mr. David Feltman, and the members concurred.

A. Bus Stop Program

Mr. Feltman

Mr. Feltman explained to the members that he is managing an ongoing program to replace all 3200 bus stop signs in the CATS system. The current signs do not display route or schedule information, and new signs are being designed by a sign design consultant to provide more information for riders. He displayed three alternative designs, each showing high-, medium- and low-volume stop designs, and briefed the members that all signs will contain appropriate route and schedule information, and will probably also display the bus stop number. Mr. Feltman noted that installation of new signs with stop numbers will also allow CATS to maintain a data base of bus stops and

their respective amenities. He also told the members that every stop will be identified by its GPS coordinates.

Mr. Feltman advised the members that the proposed sign designs will be presented to the public at a series of public input meetings, and that the data gathered there will be used in the decision on a final design. Once the design is finalized, bids for fabrication and installation will be solicited, in May 2001. Installation will begin in the Fall of 2001, and Mr. Feltman noted that all the new signs should be installed by December 2001 or January 2002.

Mr. Horstman noted that bus stop signs are often obscured by vegetation or other obstacles, and asked how that problem will be dealt with. Mr. Feltman explained that although he was not aware of what is currently done, in other cities the bus drivers are sometime responsible for reporting obscured or damaged signs. Mr. Edmunds asked whether the bus stops will have names, and was told they will be identified by number only. Mr. Parker commented that some of the shelters may have names. Mr. Kinard noted that the stop numbers will also be integrated into the automated trip planning system.

Mr. Feltman told the members that one challenge in installing new signs is to make them accessible to the visually-impaired, and that each sign will probably be mounted on its own pole, of a unique design recognizable by the visually-impaired.

Mr. Loflin asked whether there are more high- or low-volume stops in the system, and Mr. Feltman told him there are more low-volume stops, and that there may be more kiosk-type signs installed in the Uptown area because the stops serve more routes. Mr. Feltman also briefed the members that no decision has yet been made on whether and how to color code the signs and the routes. Mr. Parker reminded the members that the new sign program is currently one of CATS' most important projects.

B. Market Research Results

Mr. Kinard

Mr. Kinard provided the members with a slide presentation detailing the preliminary results of market research conducted by CATS in the Fall of 2000. He explained that the results include both qualitative and quantitative data, and outlined the methodology used. His presentation focused first on riders, providing demographic and destination information and research results on their perceptions, values and reasons for using transit; then providing the same types of information on non-riders. The presentation closed with a description of how the research data will be used.

Mr. Kinard pointed out that the Trip Purpose findings indicate that most current rider trips are to and from work, but that neighborhood services such as the EZ Rider service are being used for a significant number of other purposes.

Mr. Loflin asked how data was gathered from non-riders, and Mr. Kinard explained that citizens throughout the region were randomly surveyed.

Mr. Kinard noted that both riders and non-riders assigned the lowest rates for CATS performance to the areas of bus stops and shelters, and that the amenities improvements program will address that.

IV. Chairman's Report

Mr. Loflin

Mr. Loflin noted that for the second meeting in a row, there was no quorum present, and asked the members whether it was their opinion that a given meeting should be cancelled in advance if it is known that there will not be quorum. Mr. Edmunds expressed his concern that sparsely-attended meetings may not be worth holding. Ms. Blue expressed her concern that canceling meetings due to low attendance could result in failure to hold the six meetings per year required by the By-laws. Mr. Horstman suggested better enforcement of the attendance provisions of the By-laws. Mr. Parker suggested that changing the time or day of the meeting could make it easier for members to attend more regularly. Mr. Loflin asked Ms. Boggs to poll the members regarding a time or day change, prior to the next meeting.

V. Chief Operating Officer's Report

A. MTC Update

Mr. Parker

Mr. Parker briefed the members that the MTC was scheduled to consider the assumption of the Uptown Circulator Service from the Charlotte Center City Partners by CATS at its March 28th meeting. He explained that such an assumption, if approved by the MTC, would likely take place as of July 1, 2001; and would involve the purchase of new vehicles, possible rubber-tire trolleys.

He noted that the MTC was also scheduled to vote at that meeting on approval of the FY2002-2003 Transit Program, and on whether to go ahead with the North Corridor Commuter Rail Project. He told the members that it is likely that the MTC will vote to approve purchase of the Norfolk Southern rail right-of-way into the North Corridor.

Mr. Parker pointed out that in April the MTC Meeting agenda will include discussions regarding implementation of express service to Rock Hill, South Carolina and Mooresville; and a Southpark area shuttle. Mr. Edmunds asked whether the Mooresville line would be an extension of Route 77, and Mr. Parker told him it will likely be a direct line.

B. Annual Cost of Town Services Report

Mr. Parker

Mr. Parker provided the members with copies of the Annual Cost of Town Services Report, which is compiled in accordance with the Interlocal Agreement. The report displays the actual FY00, estimated FY01 and projected FY02 costs of CATS services to each of the Towns, and shows the costs as a percentage of CATS total Operations Costs compared with the Towns' percentage of transit sales tax contributions. Mr. Parker pointed out that the report indicates that in FY01 and FY02, the Towns will receive more service than they contribute sales tax.

Mr. Loflin asked whether ridership on the Gastonia Express is starting to rise, and Mr. Parker told him that ridership will take some time to start to increase, but that he is confident that it will; and cited a direct mail campaign that is already showing results.

C. Countywide Transit Services Plan

Mr. Downing

Mr. Jon Downing briefed the members that the consultants carrying out the Countywide Transit Services Study have developed a set of preliminary service proposals, and he provided a slide presentation on them. He described the methodology used, based primarily on public input.

He told the members that the consultants have identified five service objectives: 1) Improve service along proposed corridors; 2) Strengthen core routes; 3) Develop transit centers; 4) Serve new areas; and 5) Consider other changes. Within each objective area, the consultants have proposed specific actions. The service proposals will be presented at another series of public input meetings, then further refined and presented to the TSAC and the CTAG in June or July of 2001.

Ms. Blue asked for a definition of "limited stop service", and it was explained that limited stop service is that which stops at only selected stops along a given route. Limited stop service would be "layered in" among the regular route service for a given route.

Mr. Downing also briefed the members on the Community Transportation Services Plan, which reviewed paratransit needs and services, focusing on the CATS Special Transportation Service and the Department of Social Services. The plan identifies current strengths and weaknesses of the current paratransit system, and some improvement objectives. The plan ultimately proposes a Special Transportation Brokerage Steering Committee which would coordinate paratransit services throughout the area, eliminating duplication and making better use of resources.

VI. Next Meeting: Currently scheduled for Thursday, April 12, 2001